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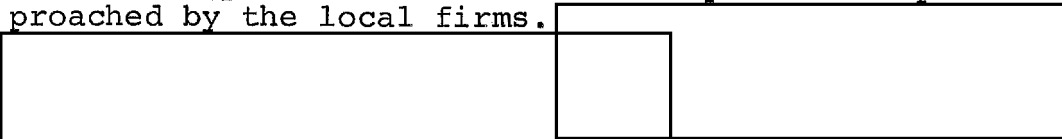
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CUBA-CARIBBEAN: Havana is again trying to drum up trade in the Caribbean.

Two members of a Cuban commercial delegation on their way to Chile reportedly met with representatives of two of Jamaica's leading import firms in Kingston on 19 and 20 January. The Cubans offered to sell shrimp and lobster at well under the market price; payment would be made in pounds sterling. Transportation arrangements would be handled by Havana through chartered cargo ships or Cubana Airlines. The Cubans also offered one of the firms unmarked fresh and frozen seafood products for resale in the US if the Jamaicans would provide the transportation. The burden of persuading the Jamaican Government to permit the imports was left to the importers.

The negotiations are further evidence of Havana's low-key campaign to establish commercial and cultural contacts with its neighbors in the Caribbean as a first step toward eventually achieving diplomatic relations with independent states. So far, Cuba has developed limited trade with Martinique and Guadeloupe and achieved informal ties with Trinidad and Tobago. Although Cuban attempts to deliver cargoes to consignees in some of the English-speaking islands of the Lesser Antilles were rebuffed last year, the Jamaican Government, which maintains consular relations with Havana to protect about 20,000 Jamaican nationals in Cuba, may be more inclined to cooperate if approached by the local firms.

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